

NARRATOR: Davidson, Roger
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: June 27, 2000
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
PROJECT: Smokejumpers/Forest Fire Fighters

Tape

Counter	Summary
000	Introduction
005	Davidson offered a brief biography of his life. He talked about where he grew up, where he went to school, and where he served in the military. He started smokejumping after leaving military service in 1947. He also mentioned the various colleges where he went for military training and academic study. Davidson worked at various jobs, including marketing for Mobil Oil Company in various spots in southern California and Boise, Idaho. He also tried his hand at a rental business and pizza parlors (Brass Lamp Pizza) in Boise and other Idaho cities. Davidson got out of the pizza business in 1977; he has managed various properties in southwestern Idaho up to the present.
405	Davidson jumped from planes for four years. He had forty-four total jumps during his time. Davidson and Reeves discussed other narrators in this oral history project.
480	END OF SIDE ONE TAPE ONE SIDE TWO
000	Davidson recalled his first training jump and his first fire jump. His first fire jump was on Bohannon Creek in the Salmon National Forest, and he told a story about that jump.
075	Davidson discussed the physical training involved in being a smokejumper. He also mentioned some fellow smokejumpers that excelled at some of the physical activities.
160	Smokejumpers were competitive, according to Davidson. He also talked about the teasing that went on among the jumpers. Some tension could build between jumpers who served in World War II and those who had not.
225	Davidson discussed some of the academic training, learning the science of fire.

- 255 Davidson's nickname was Toad. He mentioned how he got the nickname, and Reeves talked about another narrator's story about Davidson's nickname.
- 295 Davidson never feared jumping out of a plane. He did mention some apprehension about jumping, particularly concerning a difficult landing area. He told a couple of specific stories about some difficult jumps.
- 355 Davidson recalled the look of the smokejumpers base camp in McCall, Idaho, including the numerous buildings and training areas. He also talked about McCall's look during the late 1940s/early 1950s, including the various bars in the town.
- 485 **END OF SIDE TWO**
TAPE TWO SIDE ONE
- 000 Introduction.
- 005 Davidson continued talking about McCall, Idaho, including the creation of the Shore Lodge.
- 035 Davidson recalled the procedures, with many specific details, involved in jumping on a fire. He talked about the protocols from the initial fire call to the return to base. According to Davidson there was a couple of difficult "pack-outs," including Sheep Mountain.
- 285 Davidson thought the food served at the camp and the food jumpers could put in their packs was good. When a jumper's name was not high on the list, he worked on other projects. Some projects, according to Davidson, seemed like busy work, but he also said that most projects were sensible.
- 370 During the 1949 fire season, Davidson got his picture in the *Saturday Evening Post*, while fighting a fire at Shell Rock. Davidson talked about the fires in 1949 and other fires during his years jumping. He mentioned specific fires on Roaring Creek and Tumble Creek during the 1948 season.
- 450 Davidson recalled what things he took from smokejumping that he applied to the rest of his life.
- 485 **END OF SIDE ONE**
END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Allen, Charles
American Institute of Foreign Trade
Bear Creek (Idaho)
Bohannon Creek (Idaho)
Boise National Forest
Boise, Idaho
Brass Lamp Pizza
Butte, Montana
Cascade, Idaho
Case, Ed
Clayball, Paul
Colorado College of Mines (Colorado State University)
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Cougar Basin (Idaho)
Davidson, Frank
Davidson, Mary
Dog House (McCall, Idaho)
Egger, Bruce
Eubanks, Nick
Eubanks, Scott
Fickle, Dale
Forest Grove, Oregon
Fresno, California
Glendale, California
GP (General Petroleum)
Henderlong, Charlie
Johnson, "Shakey"
Johnson, Lloyd
Lake Club (McCall)
Los Alamitas, California
Los Angeles, California
Manns Creek (Idaho)
McCall, Idaho
Me-n-Ed's Pizza
Mobil Oil Company
Montana School of Mines
Pacific University
Payette Lake
Peterson, Seymour "Pete"
Roaring Creek (Idaho)
Roosevelt Grade School (Boise)
Salmon National Forest
Salmon, Idaho
San Jose, California

Saturday Evening Post

Shakey's Pizza

Sheep Mountain (Idaho)

Shell Rock (Idaho)

Shore Lodge (McCall, Idaho)

Shriver, George

St. Alphonsus Hospital (Boise, Idaho)

St. Joseph's School (Boise, Idaho)

St. Teresa's Academy (Boise, Idaho)

Tijuana Club (McCall, Idaho)

Tomato Point (Idaho)

Tumble Creek (Idaho)

United States Geological Survey

United States Navy

University of Idaho

Warren, Idaho

Washington State College (Washington State University)

Webb, Wayne

NARRATOR: Davidson, Roger “Rod”

INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves

DATE: September 20, 2000

LOCATION: McCall, Idaho

PROJECT: Smokejumpers/Forest Fire Fighters

Tape

Counter

Summary

000	Introduction.
015	Davidson attended Catholic schools in Boise after grade school. He explained why he attended those institutions.
035	During Davidson’s time as a smokejumper, it was a seasonal job for most smokejumpers. He never considered pursuing forestry as a career.
050	After receiving a degree at University of Idaho, Davidson worked as a hydrologist. He explained what a hydrologist does and where in Idaho Davidson worked on that job. Davidson also gauged streams inside of Yellowstone National Park.
115	Davidson received an economics degree from University of Idaho. He explained how classes he took in the Navy helped him toward an economics degree.
140	Davidson attended graduate school at the American Institute of Foreign Trade. He elaborated upon how he matriculated at that institution. It excited him to attend this place, because he could work for a corporation somewhere outside the United States. In Davidson’s case he thought he would work for Gillette in Brazil. He ended up working for GP (General Petroleum) in the United States.
205	Davidson worked for Mobil Oil, which is part of GP. He explained his loyalty towards Mobil Oil Corporation. They made him feel part of the corporation from the beginning and made him feel that advancement was very possible. He remembered being well paid, which made him feel good.
265	For Mobil Oil Corporation, Davidson worked in California. His family stayed in small communities outside of big cities in California, so he never felt any culture shock moving from Idaho to California.
335	Around 1963 Davidson and his family returned to Idaho. He explained why they moved back to Idaho. He also described, in detail, what he did in Boise with Mobil Oil.

- 415 Davidson, while still working for Mobil Oil, served as an investor in a pizza parlor, called Brass Lamp Pizza. He also found a location to put the first Brass Lamp Pizza. He eventually resigned from Mobil Oil and worked for the pizza parlor full time. He tried to find locations for new pizza parlors. He also served as business' accountant.
- 475 Responding to the interviewer's question, Davidson described why he and his partners decided to expand to other towns and cities in Idaho.
- 505 **END OF SIDE ONE**
TAPE ONE SIDE TWO
- 000 Davidson described the land and buildings that he purchased to create more Brass Lamp Pizza.
- 025 When Davidson left Brass Lamp in the 1970s, he kept some properties, which he later used to make money by buying, leasing or selling land or buildings.
- 050 When Davidson returned to Boise in the 1960s after living in California, he saw many changes in Boise. He described the changes in the city and the things that stayed the same. He told a story about buying a building on Sixth and Main in Boise in the 1960s.
- 080 Davidson enjoyed growing up in Boise. He found it to be a "typical" small-town experience. He mentioned the things he did as a child that children no longer do, such as playing marbles.
- 105 When Davidson served as a smokejumper in McCall, Idaho, he felt that smokejumpers felt really proud of themselves and what they did. He thought the smokejumpers could be described as "bad boys," but he felt that they never did anything too bad, mainly just drinking and fighting.
- 145 Davidson also mentioned gambling as a pastime in McCall, since it was legal during his time as a smokejumper. He continued to describe the set up of gambling parlors in McCall and Salmon.
- 200 Davidson talked about the creation of the Shore Lodge in McCall and how it changed (or did not change) the make up of McCall. Davidson felt McCall needed to change in the 1950s anyway, because bars made up most of its business.
- 235 Davidson trained physical for both the smokejumpers and the military. He felt the training for both were similar, and he mentioned that most of the smokejumpers were in good shape before entering the smokejumper program.

- 250 During his time as a first-year smokejumper, Davidson did not recall any rites of passage between old and new jumpers. He felt that way because in 1947 almost everybody was new. By 1950 he said that veterans began to tease new smokejumpers.
- 290 Davidson held a great admiration for the pilots who flew smokejumpers. He explained why he held pilots in high regard. He also discussed the role of the spotter during a jump.
- 335 Smokejumpers, according to Davidson, could stay a number of days on a fire, depending on the size of the fire and the location of the fire. Davidson talked about how fires were fought in the late 1940s; fire fighters fought all fires regardless of location.
- 385 Davidson talked about suppressing a fire, including what steps to follow before the crew could pack out from the blaze. Davidson described the fire in the summer of 2000, the Burnt Flats fire. This fire burned near Davidson's home in Whitebird, Idaho, and he helped on an initial attack. He described the differences between this fire and fires he fought in the late 1940s/early 1950s.
- 500 **END OF SIDE TWO**
TAPE TWO SIDE ONE
- 000 Davidson offered his opinions about the fire season during year 2000. He explained the differences between that fire season and his summers fighting fire, particularly in terms of safety. He told a story about a ranger in the 1940s that did not report a fire and received a reprimand. The fire, according to the ranger, would not cause any future problems, but fire fighters went to fight the fire with one fire fighter dying battling the blaze.
- 055 Davidson compared this fire season of 2000 to other fire seasons, specifically the fire season of 1994. He also provided his opinions on why recent fire seasons have been so prolific.
- 085 Project fires are fires that exceed initial containment and require a certain number of people and equipment. Davidson detailed the project fires he and his fellow smokejumpers worked on from 1947-1950. He gave examples from *Who's Who in Region 4 Smokejumping, 1943-1997*. He specifically described the Hunts Gulch fire in 1949, when his picture ended up in *Saturday Evening Post*.
- 140 Davidson described the differences in technology between today and Davidson's time fighting fire. He also mentioned the equipment he took onto a fire, including Pulaskis, axes, and cross-cut saws.

195 When they did not fight fire, smokejumpers worked on projects in and around the base. Davidson mentioned non-fire work during the summer, including upkeep around the base and maintenance of the forest. He told a story about assisting a ranger in blowing up debris to clear a creek.

240 Davidson explained how he became involved in smokejumping. Friends of his were involved in smokejumping and told him about it. So, he applied and received acceptance. Davidson had worked for the forest service before, so he felt that helped him get the job.

275 Smokejumpers, including Davidson, have kept in touch with each other. He explained why he has continued to keep in touch. He said it was some indescribable bond.

300 Davidson told the interviewer how he began working for the forest service before he became a smokejumper. He got these jobs during World War II, when labor was scarce. He told a story about prisoners of war jumping on forest fires near Moose Creek.

355 **END OF SIDE ONE**
END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Acorn Butte Fire (Idaho, 1947)
Allen, Charles
American Institute of Foreign Trade
Boise, Idaho
Brass Lamp Pizza
Burnt Flats Fire (Idaho, 2000)
Case, Ed
Dog House, The (McCall, Idaho)
Fickle, Dale
General Petroleum
Huntz Gulch Fire (Idaho, 1949)
Little Lost River (Idaho)
Los Angeles, California
McCall, Idaho
Mobil Oil Corporation
Moose Creek (Idaho)
Nielsen, Glen "Ace"
Roaring Creek Fire (Idaho, 1948)
Roosevelt Elementary (Boise, Idaho)
Salmon River
Salmon, Idaho
San Francisco, California
San Jose, California
Sheep Mountain Fire (Idaho, 1947)
Shore Lodge (McCall, Idaho)
Silver Creek (Idaho)
Snake River
St. Joseph's School (Boise, Idaho)
St. Teresa's Academy (Boise, Idaho)
Tumble Creek Fire (Idaho, 1948)
United States Navy
University of Idaho
Whitebird, Idaho
Who's Who in Region 4 Smokejumping, 1943-1997 (*book compiled by Leo Cromwell*)
Wood River (Idaho)
Yellowstone National Park